CC#11

December 30, 1936.

Circular Letter No. 59.

Subject: Distribution of Revised Course of Study in Written Composition.

To Superintendents of Schools.-

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are sending you under separate cover enough copies of the Revised Course of Study in Written Composition to supply a copy to each teacher in charge of English in grades IV - VIII of the urban and rural zones. This revision will supersede the section on written composition given on pp. 151-184 of the Tentative Course in English for the Elementary Schools, 1935-36.

This Revised Course aims to bring about a simplification of the work in written composition as previously outlined in the Tentative Course in English; to effect some important changes in the methods suggested for the teaching of productive language work; and to provide some much needed help to the teachers in charge of this phase of English instruction.

The simplification of the work has been achieved largely through the redistribution of the different types of written composition and of the several composition activities among the grades above the third, making the minimum essentials for each grade fewer and simpler than heretofore. Letter writing has been eliminated from the fourth grade as a major activity. It begins as a co-operative class activity in the fifth grade and becomes and individual activity in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Business correspondence is not started until the sixth grade.

Précis weiting will be started in the seventh grade in the form of co-operative class compositions and continued in the eighth as an individual activity. Translation from Spanish into English will be the major composition activity in the fourth grade and woll receive considerable attention in all the other grades. Translation from English into Spanish is introduced in the eighth grade. Copying and dictation, as aids in teaching the mechanics of composition are given a place in all the grades beginning with the fourth.

Besides these major changes intended to insure a sounder development of the pupil's power to express his ideas in writing, a few other changes concerned with the methods of teaching weitten composition have been included in this Revised Course.

Great emphasis has been placed upon the building of the active vocabulary needed by the pupil to engage successfully in every composition activity, and provision has been made for the introduction of such a vocabulary through the study of selected models and through the oral approach to the writing of the composition.

This oral approach should be an important step in every lesson in written composition. Ably conducted, the approach should arouse the interest of the pupil in the activity that he is about to undertake; should make him recall his own experiences, and should acquaint him with new experiences. This step in the lesson will serve the teacher to introduce the new words which are essential for the young weiter to express his ideas clearly and precisely. The oral approach does not involve, by any means, the oral rendering of the composition by a few pupils before the class as a whole sets about to put it in black and white. Such a procedure would rob productive work of all traces of originality.

With the purpose of reducing the teacher's load as well as with the purpose of securing more uniform work throughout the Island, the English Committee has included in the Revised Course much information connected with the mechanics of letter weiting. The proper arrangement of the parts of the letter, the style, rules governing social and business correspondence, the addressing of the envelope, the folding of the paper and its insertion into the envelope--these and many other details of letter writing have been fully explained and illustrated.

Not less helpful will be the section on lesson planning. This part of the Revised Course offers suggestions in connection woth the chief steps in planning lessons in letter writing, précis weiting, and translation. Model lesson plans worked out in accordance with these suggestions and successfully tried out are included.

As a further aid to the teachers, the unit organization was adopted in making the revision. For each grade we have planned a set of specific objectives, a detailed outline of the work, an extensive list of suggested approaches and activities, and the desired outcomes.

The collection of model letters which the teachers may adapt to suit their needs, some examples of précis, and the list of idiomatic expressions included in the course will supply valuable material to the teachers of written composition.

We hope that this revision of the course of study in written composition will prove of great help to all the teachers of productive language work and that through its use we shall succeed in leading our pupils to more spontaneous and genuine self-expression.

Please bring this letter to the attention of all of the teachers in charge of English in grades IV - VIII.

Very cordially yours,

Signed-- JOSÉ PADÍN
Commissioner of Education